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VERTICAL FILE



ST. BOTOLPH CLUB.
A MEMORIAL
EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS
BY LÉON POURTAU.

FROM WEDNESDAY, DEC. 7, 1898, TO FRIDAY,
DEC. 16, 1898, INCLUSIVE,

Exclusive of Sunday.

LÉON POURTAU.

Nov. 23, 1868—July 4, 1898.

The disaster of the "Bourgogne" brought to a close, before the age of thirty, a career already rich in achievement and filled with promise of success to come.

It is in order to pay a tribute to the memory of Léon Pourtau that his friends have brought together some of his paintings, as well as to enable them and the public to retain some examples of his work, which will be sold for the benefit of his aged parents in Europe.

It was as a musician that he was known, and in his music that he excelled; and yet he loved his painting still more: it was in a close and intimate contact with Nature that he most rejoiced. He went to her as a child, and interpreted her phases with all the love and comprehension of a large, simple nature; indeed, the beauty and directness of his character is reflected in his painting.

Something more precious than mere technical skill marks his work,—the simplicity and affection of one entirely possessed by it. It is faithful work in which nothing is slurred — his fine perception of balance and fitness forbade that. Sincerity is the key-note of his work as it was the key-note of his character.

Pourtan painted for the love of it,—for the love of the air, the light, the sun, of Nature in all her changes; and, in looking over these varied subjects, we cannot but respond to the appeal which they make to our common humanity, to the details dwelt upon with fondness, to what the French call the *intime*; they have something to say to us all.

Léon Pourtau's training, which was meagre, included some instruction from

Pizarro, whose color scheme he adopted to some extent as best suited to render his impressions of Nature. He had been at work but a few years, and the time he could devote to it was limited; he was still feeling his way, but with such sympathy and comprehension and devotedness that it needed but time to complete the promise of future success.

A pupil of Rose, the clarinet teacher at the Paris Conservatory, Pourtau took the first prize in 1887. Engaged as a member of the Colonne orchestra, he was one day late at rehearsal because he had miscalculated the time necessary to go from the Ecole des Beaux Arts to the Châtelet — for even then he was divided between music and painting. There was a disagreeable scene, and Pourtau resigned his position to go as first clarinetist to the Grand Théâtre at Lyons; and he went into exile that he might paint at his leisure.

The technique of Pourtau as a clarinetist was a constant source of wonder — but he was more than an accomplished virtuoso, in the lower and more common sense of the word. It was not the dazzling brilliance of his technique, nor was it the sensuous and indescribable beauty of tone, which convinced you that he was a genius; nor was it the purity or the unerring taste of his phrasing that set him apart from others.

When Pourtau played in solo or *ensemble*, you thought more of the music than of the instrument, more of the rare and poetic individuality than of the musician. He gave vent to his feelings, dreams, hopes, sorrows, aspirations, by interpreting the musical thoughts of others. When Pourtau played, a poet blew the clarinet.

Having spoken of the musician and the artist, it may not be out of place to dwell for a moment upon the man, and this can be best done by quoting the words of a close and appreciative musical friend:

"To speak of Pourtau brings to memory many charming reminiscences. He

had the nature and simplicity of a child, which contrasted curiously with his violent feelings of horror for things conventional or *bourgeois*.

"His taste in music was catholic in the extreme. The wish to understand and to appreciate was a strong characteristic of the man, and he could be as enthusiastic over Richard Strauss's "*Till Eulenspiegel*," as over a symphony by Mozart or a quintette by Brahms.

"His playing on the clarinet was something never to be forgotten: tone, taste, technique,—all the qualities were his in the fullest degree.

"As is often the case, he was more or less indifferent to that in which he excelled, hoping to be able some day to devote all of his time to painting.

"Besides his eminent talent as a musician, his accomplishment as a painter, I personally cherished him for his righteousness, truthfulness, his warm, loyal heart, and his peculiar, interesting turn of mind."

CATALOGUE.

1. Spring.
2. Corner of Yard.
3. Spring.
4. Charles River.
5. Portsmouth, N. H.
6. Medfield.
7. Medfield.
8. Nature Morte.
9. Medfield.
10. Medfield.
11. Medfield.
12. Medfield.
13. Portsmouth, N. H.
14. Charles River at Spring Street.
15. Medfield Garden.
16. Portsmouth, N. H.
17. Lilacs.
18. Portsmouth, N. H.

19. Portsmouth, N. H.
20. Portsmouth, N. H.
21. Charles River Marshes.
22. Medfield Garden.
23. The Japanese Lantern.
24. On the Charles River.
25. Charles River.
26. Winter — Roxbury.
27. Winter.
28. On Charles River.
29. Night.
30. Charles River.
31. On Charles River.
32. The Garden Walk.
33. Charles River.
34. Roxbury.
35. Sunset.
36. Evening.
37. The Rustic Seat.
38. Gypsies.
39. Sunset.
40. Charles River.
41. On the Road — Sunset.
42. Charles River Marshes.

43. Sunset.
44. Portsmouth.
45. Gypsy Encampment.
46. Charles River — Spring Street.
47. The Mist.
48. Chrysanthemums.
49. Charles River — Medfield.
50. Medfield.
51. Fruit.
52. The Storm Cloud.
53. Little Garden Walk.
54. Portsmouth, N. H.
55. Medfield.